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Transforming Hydebank Wood Young Offender's Centre into a Secure Training College

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This briefing paper examines the transformation of Hydebank Wood Young Offender's Centre (YOC) into a Secure Training College and the role that education and vocational training can play in helping young men to begin to consider desisting from crime. Hydebank Wood YOC was used to detain young men in Northern Ireland aged between 18 and 21, with some remaining detained there until they are aged 24. An independent review panel examining the conditions, management and oversight of prisons in Northern Ireland recommended the transformation of Hydebank Wood YOC into a Secure Training College. A Secure Training College aims to reduce re-offending by encouraging participation in educational and vocational programmes and endeavouring to ensure that individuals leave prison with the motivation, self-discipline and independence to commit to further studies, training or employment. Hydebank Wood first began operating as a Secure Training College in April 2015 and was the first Secure Training College in the UK. This paper is based on the findings emerging from Keira Flanagan's PhD research, which specially focused on the role educational and vocational training may play in encouraging desistance and how the young men and staff perceived and reacted to the changes introduced as part of this transformational process.

The research on which this paper is based was conducted between July 2016 and December 2016 when Hydebank Wood was still in the early stages of its transformation. International research on penal reform demonstrates that often transformational change can lead to temporary periods of confusion, unease and disquiet among both staff and those imprisoned, as these groups adapt to the changes emerging from the reforms. This is often referred to as the 'paradox of reform' and tends to last until these new changes have become embedded and a new predictability of regime has been found. As this research was undertaken in the early stages of this transformation, the new changes in Hydebank Wood College had not yet become embedded and examples of unease, uncertainty and confusion can be found. These findings should be interpreted in this context and it such be recognised that such findings are common in the early stages of transformational reforms.

The findings presented in this briefing paper are based on 30 days of non-participant observation, 32 interviews with imprisoned young men, 17 interviews with Northern Ireland Prison Service and Belfast Metropolitan College staff, as well as a review of relevant available administrative data.

The paper begins by comparing the regimes in Hydebank Wood YOC before and after its transformation into a Secure Training College, before moving on to discuss some of the challenges associated with the transformation at the time the research was conducted. Next, the potential for

these changes to affect the young men's resettlement is explored and some of the key benefits associated with the transformation are outlined. The paper then concludes with some suggestions for how this work could be enhanced and the challenges identified during the research overcome. However, it should be remembered that the generalisability of the findings presented in this paper are limited by the timeframe in which the research was conducted.

1 Setting the Scene

As part of the Criminal Justice and Courts Bill 2014, the UK government set out its intention to invest in Secure Training Colleges, with the aim of seeking to make imprisoned young people 'better citizens not better criminals'. The UK Government expressed their desire to change the culture in Young Offender Centers so that an emphasis on learning was placed at the heart of young people's experiences of imprisonment. The UK Government believed that by emphasising education, and placing education and vocational training at the heart of the prison regime, this would help to reduce young people's probability of re-offending. Yet, in 2015, many of the attempts to transform Young Offender Centers into Secure Training Colleges were called to a halt due to its associated costs and the wider fiscal challenges facing the UK economy. However, this was not the case in Northern Ireland and Hydebank Wood YOC became the first Young Offender Center in the UK to transform into a Secure Training College. This transformation was undertaken in response to recommendation 40 of the independent review panel's report (known as the Owers Prison Review Report) into the conditions, management and oversight of prisons in Northern Ireland.

Before its transformation into a Secure Training College, an inspection into the operation of Hydebank Wood YOC in 2013 raised a number of concerns about how Hydebank Wood YOC was operating and its culture (Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJINI), 2013). In particular, concerns were raised about the young men's safety, the amount of purposeful activity they were involved in and the extent to which resettlement was a focus of the work undertaken at Hydebank Wood YOC (CJINI, 2013). In addition, while the relationships between the young men and prison staff were described as mainly positive, concerns were expressed about the culture in Hydebank Wood YOC as over a third of imprisoned young men reported feeling victimized by prison staff (CJINI, 2013). Concerns were also raised about the ability of Hydebank Wood YOC to deliver positive outcomes for the young men and the extent to which they were being encouraged and facilitated to participate in educational and vocational programmes (CJINI, 2013). It was argued that there was not enough places available on educational and vocational courses to cater for the number of young men imprisoned and that the places that were available were being underutilised (CJINI, 2013). The lack of young men regularly accessing education and vocational training was highlighted as worrying, as well as the low levels of attainment and low numbers of young men receiving accredited educational and vocational qualifications while imprisoned. Moreover, it was argued that too many prisoners with low levels of literacy and numeracy were not having their needs met, that the delivery of education and vocational programmes were not person centered and that the management and leadership of those overseeing the delivery of education and vocational training programmes needed to be strengthened (CJINI, 2013).

Pre-transformation, the everyday regime at Hydebank Wood YOC was restrictive in terms of time out of cell (CJINI, 2013). The published regime allocated 9.5 hours out of cell on any given weekday and 7.5 at the weekend, however data revealed that the average time out of cell was ranging between 5.2 and 7 hours (CJINI, 2013). Late unlocks were common and over 3000 hours of time out of cell were lost in a three month period due to staffing shortages (CJINI, 2013). This resulted in significant regime slippage with concerns being raised that most young men were spending too much time locked in their cells and not engaged in purposeful activity (CJINI, 2013). This also resulted in the frequent and unpredictable cancellation of activities and classes at short notice, hindering the extent to which education and vocational training could be delivered in Hydebank Wood YOC during this time (CJINI, 2013). Increasingly, there were calls for the provision of educational and vocational training to be outsourced to professional bodies so as to increase the emphasis placed on accredited training and allowing the young men to continue with their education and/or training on their release (IMB, 2012, 2013). Mental health problems were also common with nearly half of the young men reporting experiencing mental health problems (CJINI, 2013).

Following the transformation of Hydebank Wood YOC into a Secure Training College, significant differences were evident in the delivery of the regime and the provision of education and vocational training programmes. Responsibility for delivery and management of education and vocational training programmes were outsourced to a number of different professional bodies (DOJNI, 2014b). In Hydebank Wood College, the Belfast Metropolitan College assumed responsibility for most of the educational and vocational training programmes available at Hydebank Wood College, although some prison staff continued to be involved in delivering vocational programmes. Specific attention was paid to the learning needs of the young men and education and vocational training was placed at the heart of Hydebank Wood College's regime. This was evident during the research as the vast majority of the young men were attending educational and vocational programmes and, in the interviews, when interviewees stressed the importance placed on education and vocational training within Hydebank Wood College. The provision of education and vocational places had also increased, as well as attendance on these programmes. All young men who were enrolled on a course resulting in an accredited qualification were individually assessed and a learning plan developed specifically to take account of their needs and goals. All the young men also had their numeracy and literacy abilities assessed to identify what available educational programmes they may benefit from participating in.

In addition, young people had more time out of cell during the core day and were more often engaged in purposeful activity through their attendance at education and vocational training programmes. An emphasis was also placed on ensuring that relationships between those imprisoned and prison staff were strengthened and enhanced so that young people felt supported in their efforts to desist from crime and encouraged to engage with the education and vocational training opportunities available at Hydebank Wood College. Numerous initiatives had also been undertaken to reduce the extent to which the young men were labelled as 'prisoners', with staff being encouraged to refer to the young men as 'students' and signage, announcements and policies also being changed to reduce negative labelling of the young men. Social enterprises and partnerships were also developed by prison staff to provide additional workplace opportunities for the young men to enhance their employability on their release and improve their resettlement prospects.

These positive developments have been recognised and praised in the most recent CJINI (2016) inspection report, in which CJINI acknowledged that the ethos of Hydebank Wood has changed from

its 2013 inspection. The CJINI (2016) found that the outcomes young men in Hydebank Wood College experienced had improved significantly from its previous inspection in 2013 and stated that the ethos of Hydebank Wood had changed to prioritise providing education and vocational training to break the cycle of re-offending and improve resettlement. As a result of these positive developments and improved outcomes for the young men, the CJINI (2016) commended the leadership, bravery and determination prison management had demonstrated in transforming Hydebank Wood College into a Secure Training College since its 2013 inspection. Nevertheless, while it was concluded that much had been achieved in a short space of time, it was also acknowledged that Hydebank Wood College was continuing its transformation, with more work required to fully achieve all of the intended aims of a Secure Training College.

In the next section, some of the remaining challenges to achieving all of the intended aims of a Secure Training College identified during the research are discussed.

2 Challenges Remaining

In attempting to transform Hydebank Wood College into a Secure Training College, a number of challenges were observed during the research. These primarily centred on staffing and resourcing issues, as well as the challenges involved in designing and implementing new policies and practices, when no pre-existing model of a Secure Training College existed within the UK.

As the transformation of Hydebank Wood College occurred during a time when the Northern Ireland Prison Service was expected to reduce its expenditure (due to wider fiscal challenges within the Northern Ireland economy), there was a limited funding available for the provision of programmes and staffing numbers were restricted. This could, at times, make efforts to promote desistance and learning among the young men harder as staff had less time to provide encouragement and individualised pastoral care, as well as limited resources to fund programmes and activities. While many prison staff welcomed the greater role they were being asked to play in promoting desistance and educational and vocational programme participation, some struggled to adapt to this change, preferring instead to maintain distant relationships with those imprisoned. Some staff were sceptical about the new policies and practices being introduced and were reluctant to implement them (e.g. referring to the young men as ‘students’ instead of ‘prisoners’). Such feelings are common when organisations go through a transformational change process and can lead to a situation whereby some staff are more enthusiastic about the new changes than others. For those that were less enthusiastic about these new changes, they sometimes felt that their concerns were not always given due consideration and were downplayed. A number of the young men also resisted being called a ‘student’ as they did not view the label ‘student’ positively, perhaps due to past negative experiences of schooling.

A number of prison and Belfast Metropolitan College staff expressed feelings of unease, confusion and uncertainty over the new changes emerging from the transformation of Hydebank Wood College, especially as a Secure Training College was a novel concept and this was the first attempt in the UK to create such an institution. This contributed to staff feeling that they lacked clarity about the overall

strategic vision of the precise operation of a Secure Training College, as well as their new roles and responsibilities, sometimes contributing to variations in staffing practices and decision-making. This could at times lead to the expression of demotivation and disenfranchisement among some prison and Belfast Metropolitan College staff. In particular, there was a concern that feelings of uncertainty among staff could affect their ability to present a consistent vision of what the young men could expect at Hydebank Wood College, resulting in inconsistencies in staff decision-making and young men's expectations. It was felt that the young men could occasionally use this inconsistency to try to exploit situations for their own benefit, which staff believed was unhelpful when attempting to promote desistance from crime. Moreover, there was a concern that as staff could sometimes hold differing views about what their roles and responsibilities were, which could add to tensions and potentially hinder the effective implementation of new policies and practices. Both groups of staff expressed a desire for a greater input into management decision-making and for management decision-making to be better informed by evaluation and research.

During the research, tensions were evident because of 'turfism' and feelings of inequity. For some prison staff, the involvement of the Belfast Metropolitan College was perceived as jeopardising their role in providing educational and vocational programmes, while others were concerned that the involvement of the Belfast Metropolitan College would lead to the minimisation of the positive role that prison staff could play in delivering such programmes. Feelings of inequity were also expressed due to staffs' perceptions of differing working conditions and entitlements between the Prison Service and Belfast Metropolitan College. For example, Belfast Metropolitan College staff wished to have access to some prison staff training courses (such as training in control and restraint techniques), while some prison staff felt that they were required to perform additional duties compared to Belfast Metropolitan College staff, despite believing that they were supposed to have a similar role to staff from the Belfast Metropolitan College. Such feelings could colour how staff perceived the transformation process at Hydebank Wood College and their reactions towards it.

Among the young men, there was a tendency to believe that staff from the Belfast Metropolitan College wanted to work with them more so than the prison staff, as they believed that the Belfast Metropolitan College staff had voluntarily chosen to work as a teacher in prison. Rather than recognising that prison staff had also voluntarily chosen to work in prison, there was a tendency among the young men to believe that prison staff worked with them because they were required to do so rather than because they wanted to do so. The young men also felt there was a disconnection between efforts to attempt to label them as 'students' when they remained subjected to prison rules and prison regulations. This was recognised by prison and Belfast Metropolitan College staff. Some frustrations with the timetabling system used to allocate the young men to classes were also expressed, as well as at the curriculum that the Belfast Metropolitan College were expected to teach. In particular, some staff were concerned that the curriculum had not been sufficiently adapted to take account of the needs of those imprisoned (e.g. their difficulties in maintain attention for long periods of time) and/or the prison context (e.g. attempting to teaching courses in information and communication technology without internet access).

In addition, barriers to effective communication and information-sharing between the prison staff and staff from the Belfast Metropolitan College were reported. Both staff from the Prison Service and Belfast Metropolitan College felt that communication between frontline staff and their management could be improved, with a desire for management to engage more with the concerns of frontline staff

being expressed. Likewise, it was felt that communication between the Belfast Metropolitan College and Prison Service could be strengthened. It was reported that information was not always easily available or shared between the different organisations or between different departments, hindering the provision of a holistic approach to addressing the needs of the young men. During the research, weekly and monthly meetings between prison staff, the Student Development Unit and Belfast Metropolitan College staff had been discontinued and information about the learning needs, behaviour and performance of the young men was not always centrally collated or shared to the extent desired. This hindered effective communication and information-sharing and could result in service duplication and staff having an incomplete picture of the needs, behavioural patterns and performance of the young men they were working with. For example, during the observations one illiterate young man was timetabled to spend some time reading in the library as staff in the timetabling unit were unaware of his illiteracy. Some Belfast Metropolitan College staff also expressed a greater desire for more information about the possible risks posed by the young men they were working with.

As such, at the time the research was conducted, the following issues were raised as ongoing challenges for the Prison Service and the Belfast Metropolitan College:

The desire for greater consultation between prison and Belfast Metropolitan College staff and their management to avoid frontline staff feeling uncertain and/or demotivated. Frontline staff wanted greater consultation with prison and Belfast Metropolitan College management, as well as to be informed about how effective new policies and practices were proving to be. In particular, staff were seeking reassurance that their daily practice was in agreement with the overall vision of management and that this practice was having a beneficial impact on the young people and the running of these organisations.

Both prison and Belfast Metropolitan College staff requested greater clarity regarding their new roles and responsibilities to ensure a greater consistency in decision-making and service delivery, as well as more information about the division of responsibilities between the Prison Service and the Belfast Metropolitan College.

There was a yearning for more resources so that staff would be better able to spend more time providing individualised support and help encourage desistance and learning among the young men. In addition, there was also a desire for more resources so that a greater range of services could be offered to the young men.

Barriers to effective interagency cooperation, communication and information-sharing were requested to be reduced. Communication and information-sharing barriers were attributed with hindering the ability of staff to obtain a holistic view of the behaviour, needs and performance of the young men so as to facilitate a holistic approach to addressing their needs.

3 Effect on Resettlement

Resettlement refers to the process of working with those in prison to prepare them for their release and reduce their probability of re-offending. The transformation of Hydebank Wood College into a Secure Training College was intended to improve resettlement by equipping the young men with the vocational and educational skills needed to obtain employment, avoid re-offending and promote participation in further studies, training or employment on their release.

As a result of the transformation of Hydebank Wood College into a Secure Training College, the young men's attendance at educational and vocational programmes increased significantly. During 2015-2016, the average attendance in education classes was 92% and in vocational classes 95%. This meant that more young men were in attendance at either education or vocational classes during their imprisonment compared to before the transformation. Nevertheless, some concerns were expressed about the extent to which the educational qualifications available were best placed to enhance their prospects of gaining employment upon their release. Many of the young men expressed fears that the educational and vocational qualifications that were on offer did not meet the needs of the labour market, as the level of the qualifications available were too low to be of interest to employers and did not address existing gaps in the labour market. While there were young people who benefited from the qualifications on offer, both the young men and staff from the prison and the Belfast Metropolitan College expressed a desire for more depth and breadth in the range of qualifications available, especially for those serving longer prison sentences.

Young men were informed about the range of educational and vocation programmes on offer during the induction process when they first entered prison. Yet, many of the young men felt this information was provided too soon to retain this information, as they were still adjusting to being detained in Hydebank Wood College. The young men also commented that this information was provided as part of a wider induction to Hydebank Wood College and did not go into detail about the specifics of these programmes or why participation in these programmes may be beneficial to them. Prison and Belfast Metropolitan College staff recognised that more work needed to be done to motivate young men to engage in educational and vocational programmes and help them overcome previous negative experiences of schooling. It was felt that it would be beneficial to undertake this work before placing the young men in classes to ensure that they were motivated and engaged to participate when in class and to reduce their probability of becoming disengaged and/or disruptive. As the majority of the young men had previously been excluded from school and/or failed to complete previous educational qualifications, it was felt that more support was required from the Belfast Metropolitan College to help overcome these negative associations with education and improve the young men's self-belief and motivation to engage with the programmes on offer.

The lack of engagement by young men while attending classes was observed during the non-participant observation. While attendance at educational and vocational programmes had increased, some young men were witnessed becoming disengaged with the material being covered in the classes. This disengagement could result in disruptive behaviour, adding to the difficulties teachers experienced trying to keep the young men in the class focused on their learning. It seemed that by requiring all young men to attend educational and vocational programmes, individuals who did not

wish to be in these classes could choose not to engage and become a disruptive focus, restricting the ability of teachers to help those who wished to progress. In this way, the young men were also responsible for deciding if they wanted to take advantage of the opportunities available to them. While the prison service and Belfast Metropolitan College could provide opportunities to enhance the young men's educational and vocational skills and qualifications, the young men had to be willing to participate in these classes and work with their teachers/instructors, if they were to successfully complete their course and obtain a qualification. For this reason, many staff felt that it would be beneficial to conduct more preparatory work with the young men to help overcome the young men's negative experiences of schooling and to provide additional supports to help ensure that any learning and communication difficulties they experienced did not hold them back from participating fully in their classes. Staff also expressed some concerns that the timeframe in which qualifications were expected to be completed did not always take account of the additional time required to help those with learning and communication difficulties, especially if other students were being disruptive.

For those young men who were engaged in the work placements that were available in Hydebank Wood College and/or interacting with the community groups entering Hydebank Wood College, these activities were generally deemed by the young men to be very beneficial and potentially more useful in helping them gain employment on their release than some of the educational qualifications available. As part of the transformation, the prison service had pro-actively sought out partnerships with local businesses and helped to create a number of social enterprises. These partnerships were generally created from the personal contacts and initiative of individual prison staff. Both staff and the young men viewed these activities extremely positively. However, not all of these activities resulted in recognised qualifications and these activities were only available to those who were the most compliant and least likely to re-offend. As a result, some young men felt these opportunities were unattainable to them, as they felt they would be unlikely to be able to maintain the level of compliance necessary to be able to partake in these opportunities. Other young men did not appear to appreciate the value of these opportunities or did not want to risk being moved from their friends if they attempted to take part in these opportunities. While it is understandable that some work placements may require young men to achieve a lower security risk status before they can participate in them, it may be advantageous to try to create further work placements within the prison that may tempt those that have difficulties maintaining compliance to avail of these placements.

During the research, it also seemed that the communication and information-sharing barriers referred to earlier could hinder resettlement efforts. While Belfast Metropolitan College staff created an individualised learning plan for those in their class who had registered to complete a qualification, these plans were not always shared with other teachers working with the same individual, the Student Development Unit or with prison staff. Similarly, student development plans created by the Student Development Unit were not always shared with the Belfast Metropolitan College staff. This could result in a situation whereby prison staff and Belfast Metropolitan College staff held separate plans aiming to meet the needs of the young men but these plans were not always accessible to those working with the young person or centrally collated to provide an easily accessible, holistic view of the person's needs, behaviour and performance. This was particularly problematic when the research was being conducted as it meant that those responsible for creating the young men's timetable did not always have direct access to these plans, which could sometimes result in confusion and frustration as young men were occasionally scheduled to the wrong classes. Misunderstandings were also evident,

as many young men mistakenly believed that the qualifications they achieved would be branded as a Prison Service qualification, making it clear to future employers that they had achieved their qualification in prison. This resulted in many young men being deterred from obtaining qualifications due to this mistaken belief.

Another concern was the stigma and labelling that these young men would continue to experience on their release from Hydebank Wood College. The Prison Service had attempted to reduce the probability of the young men internalising a criminal identity by referring to the young men as 'students' rather than 'prisoners' and attempting to challenge the stigma associated with their imprisonment through outreach activities with community groups, the media, etc. However, these efforts were limited in their potential impact when the rest of society and the criminal justice system continued to label and stigmatise the young men. This was a particularly pertinent concern for the young men as they assumed that they would be unable to obtain employment on their release because of the societal stigma associated with being imprisoned. For these reasons, efforts to avoid labelling the young men as 'prisoners' in Hydebank Wood College was viewed with cynicism by many young men and prison staff as, while they all agreed that it was a progressive approach to focus on the young men's needs rather than their offending behaviour, they felt that adopting this approach would have limited use if the rest of society and the criminal justice system continued to label and stigmatise the young men on their release. The young men also felt that more support was required from the South Eastern Health and Social Care Board to help them address their mental health and addiction issues, as these issues affected their ability to pursue educational qualifications and employment opportunities.

Accordingly, at the time this research was conducted, addressing the following issues would have furthered enhanced the impact the transformation of Hydebank Wood College was having on the resettlement needs of the young men:

Reviewing the range and depth of qualifications available to enhance the employment prospects of the young men and maximise engagement.

Undertaking more preparatory work with the young men before they are placed in educational classes so as to help overcome any negative perceptions they may hold about schooling and improve their level of motivation and willingness to engage in such classes.

Ensuring that sufficient supports are available to help the young men with any learning and/or communication difficulties they experience so that these difficulties do not stifle their engagement with educational and vocational programmes.

Reduce potential barriers to effective interagency and interdepartmental communication and information-sharing so as to ensure staff are provided with a more holistic account of the needs, behaviours and performance of the young men and that the young men are always appropriately scheduled to their classes.

Enhance the existing supports available to the young men to help them address their mental health and addiction issues so that these issues are not hindering their ability

to engage with and pursue the educational and vocational opportunities available to them.

Encourage wider society and the other organisations within the criminal justice system to reflect on how their interactions with the young men may stigmatise and label them, thereby undoing the positive efforts by Hydebank Wood College to encourage desistance from crime and the avoidance of an internalised criminal identity.

4 Key Benefits

Despite some of the concerns raised during the research, a number of positive benefits associated with the transformation of Hydebank Wood College into a Secure Training College were also reported. For instance, prior to the transformation, participation in educational and vocational programmes had been optional. During the transformation, the decision was taken to encourage all young men detained at Hydebank Wood College to participate in educational and vocational programmes to ensure they were spending their time engaged in purposeful activity and were availing of the opportunities provided to them to increase their educational and vocational qualifications. To achieve this, the capacity of these programmes had been enhanced and average attendance rates in such programmes had increased. The Belfast Metropolitan College was also commissioned to provide education and vocational training programmes. The involvement of the Belfast Metropolitan College permitted independent educationalists to manage and deliver these programmes at Hydebank Wood College, ensuring they were of a similar standard to those available within the community and allowing the young men to continue with their education and training upon their release. The structure of the awarding of educational qualifications was also revised to better reflect the transient nature of the young men's imprisonment. Educational qualifications were broken down into smaller units, allowing the young men to obtain qualifications over a shorter timeframe and making it easier for these young men to re-engage with these programmes if re-admitted to Hydebank Wood College at a later date or to continue with their educational and/or vocational training upon their release.

In addition, efforts were undertaken to transform the culture and relationships between the young men and prison staff at Hydebank Wood College. These efforts could be seen in, for example, how stigmatising terms were eradicated from the terminology used on campus to refer to the young men and the delivery of some of the education and vocational programmes by trained educationalists. These changes also encouraged a more humane approach to be adopted in the relationships and communications between prison staff and the young men, with a greater value being placed on supporting and encouraging these young men to engage in educational and vocational programmes. Measures were taken to reduce the more punitive practices and interpersonal relationships that are traditionally associated with a prison environment, transforming these practices and relationships into ones that sought to encourage self-development, learning and desistance from crime. Prison staff were no longer allowed to refer to the young men as 'prisoners' but instead were supposed to be referred to as 'students'. Other measures included: the rebranding of Hydebank Wood College as a

college; encouraging staff and the young people to refer to each other on a first name basis; giving the young men more freedom to move around the college; removing the word 'prisoner' from existing signage; referring to the site as a campus; as well as changing the external and internal design and layout of the site to be more reflective of a college campus. Moreover, an emphasis on providing pastoral care and a more humane approach to meeting the needs of the young men was stressed. These steps were taken to encourage a culture which promoted the development of positive self-identities that discouraged offending and promoted education, learning and self-belief. In particular, by avoiding referring to the young men as 'prisoners', it was hoped that the internalisation of a criminal identity could be reduced.

Prison staff were encouraged to adopt a rehabilitative approach to their interactions with the young men to promote desistance from crime and improve the wellbeing of the young men. This was appreciated by many of the young men as they reported feeling treated in a more humane manner and contributed to improvements in the interpersonal relationships between prison staff and the young men. The young men also reported that their wellbeing had been enhanced by these developments. The young men attributed the transformation of Hydebank Wood College into a Secure Training College with improving their mental health as they were out of their cell more often and were provided with a regular, structured, purposeful routine. Further, some young men described their feelings of self-confidence and self-efficacy growing, as they obtained qualifications as a result of their participation in education and vocational training, and were hopeful that they could continue their education upon their release. The young men were also very positive about their relationships with staff from the Belfast Metropolitan College.

Community groups, the media and other groups from wider society and the criminal justice system were also actively encouraged to enter Hydebank Wood College and interact with the young men. Shared spaces were created in which the young men, staff and these groups could interact with each other so that the barriers between these groups could be reduced and negative stereotypes challenged. This was perceived as being beneficial by both the young men and staff, with the young men who had participated in these events demonstrating greater self-regulation and feeling less stigmatised and judged as a result.

To summarise, some of the key benefits associated with the transformation of Hydebank Wood YOC into a Secure Training College during the research included:

The emphasis it placed on participation in educational and vocational programmes as a means of enhancing the employability of the young men and their educational prospects on release.

The positive impact that being out of their cell and engaged in a structured routine had on the mental health and psychological wellbeing of the young men.

The potential for feelings of self-confidence and self-efficacy to be developed in the young men as they successfully obtained educational and vocational qualifications.

Prison Service endeavours to discourage the internalization of a criminal identity. By seeking to avoid labelling the young men as 'prisoners', the Prison Service sought to promote the development of alternative, non-criminal identities.

Attempts by the Prison Service to challenge wider societal stereotypes of imprisoned young men so as to lessen the stigma they may encounter upon their release.

The efforts by prison staff and Belfast Metropolitan College staff to encourage the young men to avail of the educational and vocational opportunities at their disposal.

5 Going Forward

Based on the findings emerging from this research, some suggestions are offered which may help the Prison Service and Belfast Metropolitan College to address some of the challenges occurring during the research:

- Taking extra care during times of uncertainty to make sure that staff feel informed, consulted and aware of their new roles and responsibilities may help to reduce feelings of unease, uncertainty and confusion. Clearly delineating divisions of responsibilities between different organisations and departments may also help to reduce tensions and misunderstandings between staff.
- As this transformation was the first of its kind in the UK, all staff desired greater reassurance from their management that they were implementing the new practices correctly and consistently and wished to have a greater role in reporting on their experiences of implementing these new practices. Prison staff, Belfast Metropolitan College staff and the young men were keen to be informed of the successfulness of the new methods and practices they were trialling as well as to play a greater role in advising on the development and amendment of these methods and practices.
- While recognizing the existing benefits of available education and vocational training programmes, as well as the mental health benefits participation in such programmes offered, widening the range and depth of the qualifications and programmes on offer may help to enhance the employability of the young men on their release and encourage more young men to proactively engage with the programmes on offer and avail of these opportunities to obtain additional skills and qualifications.
- Expanding on the existing mental health and addiction service provision may also better help the young men to engage with and pursue educational and vocational qualifications.
- Centrally collating information on the needs, behaviour and performance of the young men and ensuring this information is easily accessible to those that need it may help to improve the ability of staff to provide a holistic approach to addressing the needs of the young men, minimise misunderstandings and timetabling confusions, while also enhancing the resettlement potential of existing services.
- Enhancing the preparatory work that is undertaken with the young men before they begin to participate in educational and vocational programmes may help to overcome possible

negative perceptions of schooling, which may reduce their willingness to engage with and make the most of the opportunities at their disposal. Specific attention will also need to be made to the outcomes and performance measures used to evaluate developments at Hydebank Wood College as a focus on attendance rates or number of qualifications achieved, while potentially useful, may not in itself improve resettlement if employers are unlikely to hire the young men or the young men are not willing to participate in the classes they attend.

- There is a need for wider society, the criminal justice system and other professionals to try to reduce the stigmatisation and labelling young men can experience on their release from Hydebank Wood College to avoid the positive work undertaken in Hydebank Wood College being undone by the young men's experiences on their release.

It must be recognised that as the transformation of Hydebank Wood College becomes more embedded, some of the issues raised in this briefing paper may be naturally resolved. As the prison staff and Belfast Metropolitan staff become more assured in their new roles and acclimatise to the new regime, feelings of confusion, unease and uncertainty will be lessened. Likewise, as the transformational process continues at Hydebank Wood College, prison management and Belfast Metropolitan College management will be continuously adapting and amending their practices to better reflect their ambitions for Hydebank Wood College. The Northern Ireland Prison Service and the Belfast Metropolitan College are working with the authors to take forward actions to address the concerns raised in this briefing paper that remain relevant to Hydebank Wood College.